

## EX CURIA—BY ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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They decided to run through the documents in the case once more, reviewing everything from the beginning. So young Courtlandt, the attorney, unwrapped the pink tape from the bundle of papers.

Wall and ceiling still bore the faded imprint of the red winter sunset. Edgerton sat before the fire, his well-shaped head buried in his hands; Courtlandt lounging by the window, presently began to read:

Paris, December 24, 1902.

John Edgerton, Esq.:

Sir—My client, Michael Innis, is seriously ill, and I am writing you at his urgent solicitation.

It would appear that, during the panic of 1884, my client came to your father's assistance, at a time when your father's financial ruin was apparently only a question of hours.

It would also appear that, upon your father's death, you wrote Mr. Innis, voluntarily assuming your father's unpaid obligations.

It further appears that Mr. Innis generously offered to wait for the sums due him, permitting you to pay at your own convenience.

In the conclusion of this last letter Mr. Innis mentions his lifelong respect for your father and his family, humorously drawing the social distinction between the late Winthrop Edgerton, Esq., and Michael Innis, the Tammany contractor; and rather wistfully contrasting the future prospects of Mr. Edgerton's son, yourself, and the chances of the child of Michael Innis.

To this letter you replied (copy herewith), repeating in a manly fashion your assurance of gratitude, holding yourself at the service of Mr. Innis.

Now, sir; if your assurance meant

more than mere civility, you have an opportunity to erase the deep obligations that your father assumed.

Mr. Innis is a man broken in mind and body. His fortune was invested, against my advice, in Madagascar Railways. Today he could not realize a thousand dollars from the investment.

For twenty years his one absorbing passion has been the education and fitting of his only child for a position in the world which he himself could never hope to attain. And his daughter has had the best that Europe can afford.

Within a month all is changed. Sir, it is sad to see the stricken man lying here, watching his daughter.

And now terror of the future for her has wrung an appeal from him to you—a strange appeal, Mr. Edgerton. Money alone is little; he asks more; he asks your protection for her—not the perfunctory protection of a guardian for a ward, but the guidance of a father, the companionship of a brother, the loyalty of a husband.

The man is blinded by worship of his own child; your father's son represents to him all that is noblest, most honorable, most desirable in the world.

Sir, this is an overdrawn draft upon your gratitude, I fear. Yet I write you as I am bidden. An answer should be returned by cable with as little delay as possible. He will live until he receives it. Marriage by proxy is legal. Special dispensation is certain.

I am, sir, with great respect, your very humble servant,

William Campbell.

Att'y and Counselor at Law,

1 rue d'Issy.

When Courtlandt finished reading he folded the letter, glancing across at Edgerton: "That was written two